

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
GOVERNORS of the CHARITY

FOR

The Relief of the poor WIDOWS and ORPHANS
of CLERGYMEN in the County of *Suffolk*;

AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE
Parish-Church of *St. Mary at Tower, Ipswich*,
On *Thursday, July 19. 1750.*

By *H. HUBBARD, B. D.*
Fellow of EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

A NEW EDITION.

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Preface to the Second Edition.

A *Second* Edition of this occasional Discourse, so many years after the *first* was published at the request of a particular Audience, may require some Apology. The Author can only plead in excuse, the sollicitation of some Friends, and the frequent demand for it at the Booksellers, since it has been out of print; whence He is inclined to hope, it may *still* be of some service, to recommend a Charity, which he has greatly at heart.



To the Right Reverend Father-in-God

P H I L I P

Lord Bishop of *N O R W I C H*,

P R E S I D E N T

OF THE

CORPORATION for the Relief of the poor
WIDOWS and ORPHANS of CLERGYMEN
in the County of *Suffolk*;

And to the REST of

The GOVERNORS of that Charity,

THIS DISCOURSE

(Originally published at the Request of the
GOVERNORS, who heard it,)

Is, with all Respect,

Most humbly dedicated

By their most obedient Servant

H. HUBBARD.



II KINGS iv. 1.

NOW THERE CRIED A CERTAIN WOMAN OF THE WIVES OF THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS UNTO ELISHA, SAYING, THY SERVANT MY HUSBAND IS DEAD, AND THOU KNOWEST THAT THY SERVANT DID FEAR THE LORD; AND THE CREDITOR IS COME TO TAKE UNTO HIM MY TWO SONS TO BE BONDMEN.

THE little Pieces of History recorded in the Books of the Old Testament were unquestionably designed for the service of the Church of God in all ages; for thus St. Paul tells his beloved *Timothy**, that *all Scripture—is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* In some of them the odiousness of vice, and the inconveniences and miseries Men bring upon themselves by their sins, are set before our eyes in the strongest light, in order to deter us from the like practices: *They are related for our reproof, and for our correction.* In others, Virtue is painted in its true and proper Colours; and the amiable Picture taken from real life is represented to us, not indeed in the gaudy dress and studied ornaments of Greek or Roman Eloquence, but in the plain and more affecting simplicity of nature; — *for our instruction in righteousness.* Of this kind is the History now before us; wherein we have a lively image of distress, heightened and aggravated by some of the most striking Circumstances; which met with immediate relief from the

* 2 Ep. iii. 16, 17.

Man of God. Let me lay the whole before you in the expressive words of the inspired Penman.

NOW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee, and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her, and upon her sons; who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out. And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God: and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

How short, and yet how full; how plain, and yet how affecting is the Narrative! He must have no bowels of compassion, who can read it without feeling some share of the unhappy widow's complicated affliction; and he must be as great a stranger to the kind affections implanted in human nature, who does not find a secret joy and satisfaction in his mind from the speedy assistance she received.

GIVE me leave to make a few reflections upon some of the Circumstances in this relation; which will lead the way to some observations not unsuitable to the occasion of our present meeting.

THE woman, who is the subject of it, was a Widow; She had been the wife of one of the Sons of the Prophets. In

In the Hebrew Commonwealth, as early at least as in the time of *Samuel*, there were Schools or Colleges; the members of which were called, *the sons of the Prophets*; and sometimes, *Prophets*. These Seminaries seem to have been under the direction of some of those venerable Persons, upon whom the Spirit of God rested in those days, and who were favoured with an immediate revelation of the divine Will, and the designs of Providence. For thus we find *Samuel* presiding over them*; And when *Elijah* was taken up into heaven, the Sons of the Prophets said, *The Spirit of Elijah, doth rest on Elisha: And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him*†; in token, no doubt, of their acknowledging him for their Master; and we find them afterwards submitting themselves to his advice and direction‡ in several particulars. And it is not improbable that from hence they might be called, *the sons of the Prophets*. Here the Students were trained up in the study of the law of *Moses*, and in the practice of Piety and Devotion: and were thereby qualified to be Teachers and Interpreters of the Law, and to excite others to the practice of it by their example; which was one considerable part of the prophetick office, and intituled them to the name of *Prophets*. And whenever God was pleased to send any extraordinary messengers to his chosen People, and to inspire them with the knowledge of future events, He generally took them out of these Schools; whence *Amos*, speaking of the commission he had received from the Lord to prophesy unto the people of *Israel*, takes particular notice of *this* as an unusual circumstance, that he *was no prophet, neither a prophet's son*, when he was called§. Persons, thus sequestered from the world, whose constant business it was, to explain, recommend, and enforce the true worship of God and the social duties of religion, and occasionally to deliver messages from God to his people, had a just claim

* 1 Sam. xix. 20. † 2 Kings ii. 15.

‡ See 2 Kings ii. 16, 17. vi. 1. ix. 1.

§ Amos vii. 14, 15.

to some regard from the Publick in return for the advantages received from them. What Provision was made for their maintenance; whether they were always of the families of the Priests or Levites, and so partook of the Tithes and Offerings according to the appointment of the Law, we are no where told. But whatever it was, it is plain from the Instance before us, it was not always sufficient to answer the exigences of a family; or even to rescue their immediate dependents from the lowest degree of poverty and want. For the unhappy Widow here was left in so forlorn and destitute a condition, that she had nothing in the house for the support of herself and her two sons, but a single Pot of Oil. Wretched Support indeed; which must very quickly fail, and leave them exposed to new and unfelt miseries! Yet these perhaps might in some measure have been struggled with: *Her* hands, (if not already enfeebled by age and infirmities) and the hands of her Sons, (if *they* had yet attained a sufficient degree of strength and firmness) however unused they were to labour, and therefore unfit for it, might have been forced to minister *something* to their necessities: Or, the eager Cravings of Nature might have overcome the sense of shame and disgrace, and have made them eloquent enough in begging to move the compassion of others, and raise a present scanty supply. But such was the hard fate of the good man, who feared the Lord; and possibly it became his fate in that corrupt and idolatrous age, *because* he feared the Lord; because he kept stedfast to the worship of the true God, and refused to recommend himself to the favour of the Great by bowing the knee to *Baal*; Or, (if the Jewish Tradition * concerning him be true) because he had spent his own fortunes, and run himself in debt, by maintaining the prophets of the Lord, and screening them from the persecuting fury of *Jezebel*: it was however his fate, that he died in debt; and hence the widow's distress received its fullest aggravation. For, according to the custom of those

* See *Joseph. Ant. Jud. Lib. ix. Cap. 4. Sect. 2.*

times, and the laws then subsisting, the Creditor came to take her two Sons for bondmen; to use them himself as Slaves; or sell them to another, for the discharge of the debt. The Jewish Historian *Josephus* relates, that she herself was also seized with her children. And if this were the fact, it may well be supposed, that in her pathetick Address to *Elisba*, the bitter Anguish she felt for them made her quite insensible of her own case. Indeed this Circumstance only varies the distress, but does not much affect the degree of it. For it would require a very nice discernment to determine, which were the more pitiable case; to be thus bereaved of both her sons, in whom were placed her only present Comforts, and all the future Hopes of her declining years; Or, to be in bondage with them. The heart-breaking Pangs of such a separation would have been a full balance for the share she might have borne in their affliction.

IN this sad reverse of fortune, She flies to the most celebrated Prophet of the Lord for relief; and She quickly found it. The holy Man of God could not be deaf to the complaints of the miserable; and it may reasonably be presumed they came with redoubled force upon him from that powerful motive, *thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord*. He knew, that the deceased had been engaged in the same righteous cause with himself: and stood in the same kind of relation to God, though in a subordinate rank; so that the distresses of *his* family were in some measure *his own*. He is therefore impatient to relieve her, and says with an eager haste, *What shall I do for thee?* — Silver and Gold, the ordinary means of assistance, he had none. He seems to have lived himself upon the voluntary contributions of others; and *they* were not likely to amount to much from a People so perverted to idolatry. — He has therefore recourse to that power of working miracles, with which God had endowed him. He doubted not, that the same Almighty Being, who had enabled him

him to heal the waters of *Jericho* for the sake of the sons of the prophets, would interpose in behalf of the widow and the fatherless, when all other succours failed. — It was a Cause worthy of God; and it succeeded accordingly. — He enlarges the little Store of Oil, and then directs the application of it; first, to satisfy the just demands of the Creditor; and then, to maintain the widow and her family. *Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.* He does not raise her to an affluence of fortune; he makes no ample provision for her; *this* might have made her forgetful of her constant dependence upon the bounty of Providence. He gives only enough to answer the demands of Justice and the cravings of Necessity. When this was done, the miracle ceased; and she was left to her own industry, and the common protection of Providence.

IN these few reflections I have made upon this history, there are several particulars so plainly suitable to the present occasion, that it is almost needless to point them out: You must have been before-hand with me in the application. If they have been properly attended to; *Go, and do thou likewise*, might answer all our purpose, and serve for a conclusion of the whole. Would we imitate, as far as we are able, this great example, we should want very little further persuasion to engage us all to promote that excellent work we are now concerned for, *the relief of the distressed widows and orphans of poor Clergymen.*

I THINK, at least, the three following observations are clearly deducible from the example we have been considering; and it may be worth our while to be a little more particular upon them.

I. THAT the Widow and the Fatherless in distress, are among the most proper Objects of our Compassion and Charity.

II. THAT

H. THAT the Widows and Orphans of Clergymen have a peculiar claim to the assistance of all Christians.

III. THAT of all Christians the Clergy are more especially concerned to promote their relief to the utmost of their power.

FIRST, I observe that the Widow and the Fatherless, in distress are among the most proper Objects of our Compassion and Charity.

THUS the first motive the widow urged to the Prophet was this, *thy Servant my husband is dead.*

EVERY Person in distress is certainly an Object of our compassion, and as such is intitled to our assistance; more especially from that Spirit of universal benevolence, which the Gospel requires. But then All are not equally intitled to it; nor can they claim an equal Share of it; because All are not in equal distress; and also, because All have not equal merit; for some regard is due to the manner, in which their distress was brought upon them, whether it were by their fault or by their misfortune. None should be entirely excluded from relief, if our Abilities would reach to All; but still, some distinction should be made; and both Reason and Religion will direct us, to bestow it in the fullest measure and proportion upon those, who want, and who deserve it most: And in both these respects, strong is the Claim of the Widow and the Fatherless.

THEIR Condition indeed is such, that even under an affluence of wealth it is justly looked upon as disconsolate; and Plenty itself can hardly raise them above compassion. The One has lost a Husband; the nearest and dearest Relation; the Protector of her weakness; the
Object

Object of her fondest affection; with whom she doubled every joy, and divided every sorrow in life. The Other are deprived of a Father; the Author, under God, of their Being, and the Promoter of their happiness; One, whom the strongest Ties of natural affection determined to employ all his care, his power, his wisdom and experience, for their welfare; the Guardian of their innocence, and the watchful Guide of their ripening years; upon whose advice and authority they principally depended, to direct their steps through the dangerous paths of giddy and unthinking Youth; and above all, to catch the first dawns of reason, and set it right; to check the early sallies of appetite and passion in their rise; to inform their yet unfulfilled minds, and regulate their manners; and to instil principles of wisdom, virtue and religion; in a word, to train them up to think and reason for themselves; and by favours and rewards, by reproof and correction, to stop the growth of every vice, to encourage every virtue, and *to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* These are some of the benefits derived from a good Father to his children; and these affect the rich as well as the poor, though not in the same degree; because the former have it in their power to procure others to take upon themselves the important charge, and stand in the place of a Father. But then it can never be expected, that the Trust should be executed with the same Zeal and Care, where there is not the same natural Affection and Tenderness to warm and enliven them. And though every Parent is not so diligent in performing his duty in all these respects, as he ought to be; yet I believe there are few, who are entirely negligent about it; and from whom their children do not receive numberless instances of beneficial kindness, which will render the loss of them truly deplorable. For as to those Monsters in nature, which are said to be the growth of this libertine Age and Country, who take pains to poison the principles and debauch the practice of their children; Nature *cannot* produce

produce *many* such ; and if *any* there be, it must be owned, the Loss of *them* is a real benefit both to their Dependents and the whole Community.

IF the desolate State of the widow and the fatherless in general can require any further confirmation, consult the Scriptures, and you will find them placed as the Representatives of misery itself. For, when the Prophet is lamenting the desolation of *Jerusalem*, he pours forth the bitterness of his sorrow in these expressions: *How is she become as a widow!* and again, *We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows**. To the same purpose, when the Royal Psalmist denounces the severest strokes of the divine vengeance upon the wicked; He draws out this from the dreadful Storehouse of Curses: *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow†*. If then these Characters are thus distressful in themselves, when alleviated by the most favourable circumstances; what must they be under the additional load of Poverty; which alone is sufficient to make any condition miserable? When the Husband and the Father was the sole Support of the family; and they are left exposed to hunger and thirst, to cold and nakedness, to wants of every kind; which the weak and tender Sex of the One, and Age of the Other, cannot supply to any degree of comfortable subsistence; then every pointed arrow of affliction sticks fast, and the widow's heart is wounded within her; whilst her innocent and helpless children are, either insensible of their loss, though they cannot but feel their wants, and cry out to her for the relief she is utterly unable to give them; Or else, too sensible of both, mingle their tears with her's, and jointly bemoan their common fate; till the mutual Sorrows of their hearts are so enlarged, that they grow too big for utterance, and above all description.

* Lam. i. 1. v. 3. † Psal. cix. 9.

SUCH deep distress must surely place them above the common rank of Petitioners, and open our hands wider to relieve them; especially if we consider further, that their misfortunes are occasioned neither by their vices, nor their follies.

MUCH of the misery we daily see in our streets men bring upon themselves. They are either too idle to labour, and find the trade of begging more easy, and perhaps more profitable; Or, they reduce themselves to real distress by a thoughtless indolence; and *put the evil day far from them**; till poverty come as one that travelleth, and want as an armed man†; Or else, they wantonly throw away their substance in an heedless and unbounded pursuit of vicious, or at least, unnecessary pleasures. I do not say that any of these, except the first, are unworthy the notice of a Christian; for real misery, wherever it appears, or however occasioned, will always be a fit object of Christian Compassion. But surely Those, whose cause we are pleading, have a much better title to it. They have lost *him*, upon whom, under God, they depended for the necessities of life; and they lost him by an Act of God, to whom alone belong the Issues of Life and Death. And it is a probable, as well as pious supposition, that it is one part of the design of Providence in such rigorous dispensations, to set before us proper Objects for our bounty; to try whether we can feel the afflictions of our fellow-christians, and are ready to relieve them. Hence it is, that to secure the observation of so important a branch of charity, God has not left us wholly to the workings of nature, but in his revealed will has recommended the widow and the fatherless to our particular regard; not only by forbidding us under the severest penalties‡ *to vex, to oppress, or to afflict* them; but by

* Amos vi. 3. † Prov. vi. 11. ‡ See Exod. xxii. 22, 23, 24. Jerem. vii. 6. xxii. 3. Ezek. xxii. 7. Zech. vii. 10. Mal. iii. 5. Matth. xxiii. 14.

giving them a distinguished place among those, for whom some Provision should be made, that they may * *eat, and be filled, and rejoice before the Lord*. And St. James has singled out this as the most essential and necessary part of our duty to our neighbour, *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction* †. Nay more, God has declared himself to be peculiarly *the Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows* ‡; and what less can He expect from the rich in this world; who are only Stewards of the good things bestowed upon them by his providence, than that these should dispense some portion of them to those, who are so immediately under his protection?—Other Objects may move, but These will force our pity; They may claim, but These will almost demand Relief. Yet even among these there may be room for choice and preference, according as their Distresses are more aggravated, or other Circumstances interfere to recommend them in a particular manner to our favour; and these considerations will serve to illustrate my second Observation : viz.

II. THAT the Widows and Orphans of Clergymen have a peculiar claim to the assistance of all Christians.

THE Cup of affliction is always bitter, but it has the taste of Gall itself, when it suddenly succeeds the sweet Honey or the Honey-comb. To sink at once into the lowest poverty from a condition that afforded a decent and reputable maintenance; to fall on a sudden from an easy fortune to its very reverse, without any prospect of redress; and from a State that drew some degree of respect from others, to be reduced to One too often attended with derision and scorn; to be forced to ask, and hazard the being refused, that relief they have been used to give; are Circumstances, that quicken the

* See Deut. xiv. 29. xvi. 11, 14. xxiv. 19, 20, 21. xxvi. 12. 1 Tim. v. 16. † James i. 27. ‡ Psalm lxxviii. 5.

Sense of misery, and make it more intolerable. And these, though not absolutely peculiar to the poor widows of Clergymen, eminently distinguish *their* Case.—For they have generally ~~in~~ their husbands life-time sustained some Figure in the world; they have kept a generous and hospitable Table, from which something might be spared for their poor neighbours; they have been admitted to a familiar acquaintance with Persons of fortune, and tasted perhaps a little of the Elegancies of Life. And even in the lowest Preferments, through the good providence of God and their own frugal management, they have been able to preserve a decency of appearance, which sets them above the Contempt of the Vulgar. All this is necessary to be done, to support the dignity of their husbands Character; the world expects it from them; and their Ministry would lose much of its weight and influence without it. But then the misfortune is, that whilst this is doing, and their Children educated in a way somewhat suitable to their Birth, the annual Income of ~~the~~ Preferment is expended; and it is well, if it be not sometimes anticipated; so that when the fatal Day is come, that cuts off Him, upon whom their All depended, it finds them wholly unprovided for the Change, and leaves them destitute both of Comfort and Support. The *Little*, that is left, is so far from enabling the disconsolate Widow to carry on the unfinished Education of the children, that it will scarce afford them present sustenance; and perhaps the Creditor is at the door, ready to seize *that Little*. Then indeed the Distress is compleat: and the miserable Orphans, (unless some kind hand be stretched forth to their assistance) instead of the early hopes they had entertained of a liberal Education, or some reputable Employment, are obliged to descend to the meanest and most servile offices for a precarious subsistence, or to *seek their bread even in desolate places*.

IN the two other learned Professions, Men of great understanding hardly ever fail of raising a considerable fortune

fortune in a little time, and Men of moderate accomplishments seldom venture to engage in them, without some paternal Inheritance to depend upon. If it should be whispered now; why are they not as cautious in the choice of this Profession? I would answer; if they were, whence should we fetch a Supply for the numerous small livings, and the many laborious Curacies in our Church? Must they be filled, as they now sometimes are, with Men of the brightest Parts and most solid Learning, who have not fortunes or interest enough to recommend them to better? But the numbers of these would not be sufficient; and it can hardly be expected, that such, as are well provided for another way, would condescend to accept them.

IN most of the secular and more gainful Employments of life, the death of the husband does not put a necessary stop to business; it may be carried on by the widow sufficiently to make a decent provision for herself and family. And in the lower Occupations, the alteration is *less* upon the like fatality, and the Sufferers themselves are better able to bear it. They have been inured to harder fare and a rougher way of life; and are thence prepared to sustain with more ease the severer strokes of adversity.

So that the poor Widows and Orphans of Clergymen are generally of all others the most destitute, the most helpless, and the least able to bear those distresses, which are in their Case the most unavoidable. All which tend to strengthen their claim to the assistance of every Christian.

BUT I must not forget to recommend them further, from the peculiar Character of those, whose Relicts they are; to which the Text itself directs me: *thy servant did fear the Lord*,—was One of the Sons of the Prophets, whose profession it was, to propagate the knowledge and practice of religion.

I AM sensible that, in this Age, every attempt to magnify the Office of a Clergyman is looked upon as invidious, and treated with scorn by the enemies of our most holy faith. But I know too, that I am not speaking to such, but to a Christian Audience; before whom I may be allowed to represent the Clergy, as the Scriptures have done: as *the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God**; whom the Holy Ghost hath made Overseers of the flock, to feed the Church of God†; who, by special commission from Christ, are the Dispensers of his Sacraments, and the Preachers of his Word. In short, their Employment is most honourable, and most beneficial to mankind; for they are *Embassadors for Christ, in whose stead they pray You to be reconciled to God†*; and they watch for your souls||. And when they have worn out their lives, and perhaps shortened them, in this great work and labour of love; do not their unfortunate Remains deserve some extraordinary compassion? Hear what the same Scriptures require in return. They are to be *esteemed very highly in love, for their works sake§*. But what is that Esteem? what is that Love, which will not shew itself in acts of kindness to their nearest Relations? *Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things***. And if to him, then surely to those, whom He valued as his own soul. *If we have sown unto You spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we (and I add, Ours too) shall reap your carnal things††?* Even so hath the Lord ordained, that They, who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel‡‡. They certainly, and their Families; or else, let us return to the errors and absurdities of Popery, and forbid them to marry.—And, to name no more, in the general Precept, *to do good unto all Men, they who are of the household of faith*, are more especially recommended to our regard§.

* 1 Cor. iv. 1 † Acts xx. 28. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 20. || Heb. xiii. 17.
§ 1 Thes. v. 13. ** Gal. vi. 6. †† 1 Cor. ix. 11. ‡‡ 1 Cor.
ix. 14. §§ Gal. vi. 10.

the Clergy are particularly concerned to promote this excellent work to the utmost of their power.

CHARITY in general is so agreeable to the Genius and Temper of our most holy religion, so often expressly enjoined by it, and so strongly recommended by the example of its great Author, *who went about doing good*; that it would be even scandalous in a Clergyman, not to distinguish himself by this eminent Badge of his Profession. — And we may venture to affirm, what our bitterest Enemies will hardly venture to deny, that no Set of men in the world are more remarkable for it, in proportion to their Abilities, than the Clergy of the Church of *England*. — But here, my Brethren, we have a closer Tie; the unhappy Petitioners of this day, through their husbands and fathers, are our near Relations, as they are of the household of God; so that what is Charity to others becomes almost a debt of Justice to them; since it is providing, as it were, for those of our own house. — Where indeed should the helpless Widow of one of the sons of the Prophets seek for relief, but from the hands of a Prophet? and where could She expect to find compassion, if she missed it there? — Have *We* received a liberal education, in the schools of the Prophets, to fit us for the work of the ministry? So did *they*. Were *we* regularly ordained by the Bishops of a Protestant Church? So were *they*. Do *we* wait at the altar, and eat the bread thereof? So did *they*. To sum up all in one word; Are *we* *Ministers* of Christ? So were *they*; and perhaps *in labours more abundant*. — Were *they* streightened in their Circumstances, and unable to make provision for their families? And may not this at some time or other be our case? or if it be not; is this distinction owing to any peculiar merits *we* can claim above *them*?

BUT I forbear; — for *I know the forwardness of your minds; — and how your Poverty, in this great trial of affliction,*

affliction, hath abounded unto the riches of your liberality. For to your power, (I bear record) yea, and beyond your power, ye are willing of yourselves; — and your zeal hath provoked very many. You have cheerfully contributed yourselves what could be spared from your little Store; and God, who enlarged the widow's Oil, hath through your means stirred up the hearts of the Laity to lend us their kind and bountiful assistance. — Their debtors verily we are. — we receive the gift with joy, and acknowledge it with gratitude and thanks. Blessed be God, who hath hitherto prospered this work in our hands! and his Blessing be upon the head of those, who have encouraged it!*

WHATEVER is irksome or burdensome in the task of collecting or distributing this charity, We as in duty bound, are ready to undertake it. We are glad to spare the blushes of the widow, and beg for *her* what a tender and ingenuous sense of shame would hardly suffer her to beg in person for herself. We ask not for the elegancies, nor even for the superfluities of life; so far from this, that effectual Care is taken, that None, who have sufficient to furnish out but a moderate maintenance, shall be admitted to any Share of your Contributions. Suffer us only to raise them above the lowest drudgeries, which they are utterly unfit for; and to put them into some reputable way of supporting themselves by their own industry. Let us at least soften those distresses, we cannot pretend entirely to remove; and make those sorrows less piercing, which without some assistance would be almost insupportable. The whole We can do, assisted by the joint contributions of the Laity, when divided among so many Petitioners, amounts to so little in proportion to their several wants, that our Enemies will read the printed accounts with some kind of pleasure; but our Friends, we hope, will be excited by them, if not to enlarge, at least to continue their

* 2 Cor. viii. 2. ix. 2.

liberality. The Oil stayed not, so long as there were empty Vessels to receive it; so let your bounty flow, till there shall be no more Objects, who both want and deserve it.

LET us all then, both Clergy and Laity, unite in this distinguished work of Christian Charity. Let us *listen to the supplication of the fatherless, and to the widow, when she poureth out her complaint**; and we shall soon feel how much more blessed it is to give than to receive†. When the ear hears us, then it shall bless us; and when the eye sees us, it shall give witness to us: because we delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish shall come upon us: and we shall cause the widow's heart to sing for joy‡. Above all things consider, that God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered unto the saints, and do minister||. And we know, who hath said; Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me§.

I CONCLUDE with the advice of the wise Son of Sirach†: Be as a father unto the fatherless, and instead of an husband unto their mother: so shalt thou be as the Son of the most High, and He shall love thee more than thy Mother doth.

* Ecclus xxxv. 14. † Acts xx. 35. ‡ Job xxix. 11, 12, 13.
 || Heb. vi. 10. § Mat. xxv. 40. † Ecclus iv. 10.

